



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA TO RECOGNIZE PEST-FREE AREAS IN BRAZIL UNDER NEW STREAMLINED PROCESS

WASHINGTON, March 5, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced that 20 municipalities in Brazil have met the criteria required to be considered free of the South American cucurbit fly, a major pest of melons.

In response to a request from the government of Brazil to recognize seven municipalities in the state of Ceara and 13 municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Norte as free of the South American cucurbit fly, APHIS evaluated Brazil's survey protocols and its system to establish, verify and maintain freedom from this pest. Based on that information, APHIS has determined that those municipalities meet the criteria for recognition as pest-free areas. APHIS has prepared an evaluation document with regard to this action, which will be available for review and comment.

In July 2007, USDA implemented revised regulations pertaining to the importation of fruits and vegetables. Under these revisions, APHIS also established the framework of a notice-based process for approving pest-free areas in exporting countries. This process allows the agency to be more responsive in recognizing changes in the pest-free status of foreign areas. In the past, APHIS recognized changes in the pest-free status of countries via rulemaking. Using the notice-based process, a notice announcing that an exporting country has provided information that meets or exceeds the pest-free criteria listed in the regulations and that APHIS officials have completed an evaluation of the request will be published in the *Federal Register*. The notice will be available for public comment for 60 days. At the time the notice is published, APHIS also will provide copies of the available supporting information. Once all comments have been considered, APHIS will, if appropriate, publish another notice in the *Federal Register* stating that the agency is recognizing the areas as free of specified pests.

To learn more about the revisions made to USDA's fruit and vegetable regulations, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the Quarantine 56 hot issues link.

Notice of this action was published in the March 3 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before May 2. Send an original and two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0013, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road,

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Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0013>. Click on “Add Comments” to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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